DISTRICT 2 – COAL NEAR MISS

On December 23, 2015, a fire ignited in one of the battery receptacles of a CAT 650 scoop battery located in an underground charging station. This fire occurred when the second output lead of an EnerSys GroundHog 3 battery charger was incorrectly connected to the 650 battery. In this charging configuration the second output lead of the charger should not have been connected to the battery. The incorrect connection caused a direct short circuit from the positive to the negative of the 128 volt battery. The fire continued until one of the power pins in the charger plug burned off and the plug was ejected from the battery receptacle. The fire was then extinguished with a fire extinguisher and rock dust. No persons were injured.

Best Practices

- Properly train employees and supervisors in the correct battery charging connections and settings.
- Before connecting batteries to chargers, don appropriate PPE. Protect your eyes and hands.
- Keep all charging stations free of combustible materials and well rock dusted.
- Make sure firefighting materials are available at all charging stations.
- Keep battery charging stations adequately ventilated. Open battery lids. Batteries generate Hydrogen (explosive gas) when charging.
- Confirm that the main scoop circuit breaker is off before making connections.
- Maintain charger leads and plugs in good condition.

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